

The Unsung Heroes of Schuyler County:

Culverts, Ditches, Retention Ponds, Oh My!

Schuyler County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWDC) Completed 33 Projects as Part of Their Multi Barrier Approach to Conservation

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WHEN you drive around Schuyler County, you can't help but admire the view. With rolling hills of forests and farmland and Seneca Lake majestically at the center, it's an idyllic drive. What you may not notice are the ditches and culverts along these roads and how important they are in protecting Seneca Lake. With Schuyler County experiencing more frequent and intense rainfall (who can forget the **2018 flash flooding** in Hector and Lodi?), many culverts and ditches are unable to handle the additional water because they are too small and outdated. Last year, the Schuyler County's Soil and Water Conservation District **completed 33 projects** throughout the county that addressed these concerns. Their efforts provided nearly 6,000 feet of stream stabilization and 5,000 feet of road ditch stabilization, culvert upsizing, and multiple retention ponds.

These projects were part of Schuyler County's **multi barrier approach to conservation**, which focuses on four key areas:

- Retention ponds: built to help store rainfall in the upper parts of our watershed to reduce pollution from storm runoff.
- Cover crops: planting cover crops helps keep soil from compacting thereby decreasing erosion and pollution from storms.
- New culverts: with more frequent and intense storms and increases in impermeable surface, culverts are being replaced with bigger ones to handle the additional water.
- Stabilization: when hydro- seeding, flexi- mat, or rock rip rap is utilized in ditches to help reduce erosion and slow water flows from storms. Streams are also stabilized with rock rip rap and by planting buffers to reduce erosion and pollution.

The 33 completed projects will keep an estimated 9,334 tons of sediment, 18,000 pounds of nitrogen, and 9,000 pounds of phosphorous from reaching Seneca Lake and other bodies of water in the county. This is good news for Seneca Lake! Nitrogen and phosphorous **contribute to Harmful Algae Blooms** (HABs) which can limit recreational opportunities like boating and swimming. Culverts, ditches, and retention ponds are often forgotten when we think about protecting Seneca Lake. Thanks to Schuyler County SWCD's work, they are a major contributor to reducing pollution from storms. So the next time you are driving around Schuyler County give a nod to the unsung heroes – the culverts, ditches, and retention ponds – that help keep Seneca Lake beautiful and healthy.